

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

- 1 1. A method for enhancing the functionality of an electronic message,  
2 comprising the steps of:  
3 receiving the electronic message;  
4 obtaining a command instruction from the electronic message; and  
5 performing a function responsive to the step of obtaining.
- 1 2. The method of claim 1,  
2 wherein the command instruction indicates an application provider for  
3 performing the function.
- 1 3. The method of claim 1,  
2 wherein the command instruction is a Uniform Resource Locator ("URL").
- 1 4. The method of claim 1,  
2 wherein the step of performing a function includes the steps of:  
3 determining an application provider from the command instruction;  
4 and  
5 sending a Request to the application provider to perform the  
6 function.
- 1 5. The method of claim 4, including the step of:

2 preparing the Request based on the command instruction.

1 6. The method of claim 4, further including the steps of:  
2 receiving a Response from the application provider; and  
3 modifying the message responsive to receiving the Response.

1 7. The method of claim 6, further including the step of:  
2 sending the modified message to a destination.

1 8. The method of claim 1,  
2 wherein the command instruction includes:  
3 a host and a file which indicate an application provider for  
4 performing the function; and  
5 at least one parameter which indicates information to be delivered  
6 to the application provider.

1 9. The method of claim 1,  
2 wherein the command instruction is included in the received message as an  
3 Internet shortcut file.

1 10. The method of claim 4,  
2 wherein the Request is sent using an HTTP POST command.

1 11. An article of manufacture including an information storage medium  
2 wherein is stored information for programming a computer to:  
3 receive an electronic message having a destination address;  
4 alter the destination address of the message; and  
5 send the message based on the altered destination address.

1 12. An article of manufacture wherein information is stored for programming  
2 a computer as in claim 11,  
3 wherein the altered destination address identifies a computing device which  
4 will perform a function on the message.

1 13. An article of manufacture wherein information is stored for programming  
2 a computer as in claim 11,  
3 wherein the message includes a command instruction which indicates an  
4 application provider which will perform a function.

1 14. An article of manufacture wherein information is stored for programming  
2 a computer as in claim 11,  
3 wherein the message includes a return address, and wherein the computer  
4 is programmed to modify the return address to identify a computing device which  
5 will perform a function responsive to a returned message.

1 15. An article of manufacture wherein information is stored for programming  
2 a computer as in claim 13,  
3 wherein the command instruction includes:  
4 a host and file which indicate the application provider for  
5 performing the function; and  
6 at least one parameter, and at least one associated value which  
7 indicates information to be delivered to the application provider.

1 16. An article of manufacture wherein information is stored for programming  
2 a computer as in claim 11,  
3 wherein a command instruction is included in the electronic message as an  
4 Internet shortcut file.

1 17. An apparatus for providing a function responsive to receiving a Request,  
2 comprising:  
3 a processor; and  
4 a processor readable storage medium in communication with the processor,  
5 containing processor readable program code for programming the apparatus to:  
6 receive the Request;  
7 perform a function responsive to an instruction included in the  
8 Request; and,  
9 prepare a Response subsequent to performing the function.

1 18. The apparatus of claim 17,  
2 wherein the Response includes instructions and data, wherein the  
3 instructions include information for disposal of the data.

1 19. The apparatus of claim 17,  
2 wherein the processor readable program code for programming the  
3 computer to perform a function includes programming the computer to:  
4 deliver the Response using an HTTP POST command.

1 20. The apparatus of claim 19,  
2 wherein the Response includes a parameter, a value associated with the  
3 parameter, and a data stream.

1 21. The apparatus of claim 19,  
2 wherein the Request is in the form of an HTTP POST command.

1 22. The apparatus of claim 19,  
2 wherein the Request includes a host, a file, a parameter, a value associated  
3 with the parameter, and a data stream.

1 23. The apparatus of claim 22,  
2 wherein the host and file indicate the apparatus for providing the function;  
3 and

- 4                wherein the at least one parameter, and at least one associated value
- 5                indicate information to be delivered to the apparatus.

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